

NATURE'S ADVOCATE



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Nature's Advocate guide was developed by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to help its members and supporters advocate for Iowa's natural resources to their elected officials.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is a member-supported 501(c)3 nonprofit conservation group that protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

For more information about INHF's land conservation and advocacy work, visit www.inhf.org.

To get involved with INHF's policy team or find more information about the content in this guide, contact Public Policy Director Anna Gray at agray@inhf.org or **515-288-1846**.



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1

IF YOU CARE ABOUT...

Find the topics you're most passionate about and learn more about the specific policies that impact them. Facts highlighted throughout the section provide significant numbers or talking points to share.

2



Next to message amplifiers at the bottom of each page, you'll find INHF's 2019 policy recommendations. Use them as a call to action or an ask to your legislators, elected officials and policy makers.

3

ADVOCACY ENHANCEMENTS

Find resources for more information or ideas for how to talk to your elected officials.

From the Loess Hills out west to the Blufflands in the northeast, there's a part of the state that each Iowan loves. In a time of heated division, we share a common pride for this land — our home — and a desire for a healthy, prosperous Iowa.

Growing up in Centerville, my love for Iowa was fostered by adventures on the family farm. Learning the history of the land, picking flowers from the cow pastures and spotting wildlife in the timber instilled in me a duty to preserve our natural resources.

I share my story with you in hopes that you will share yours — with state legislators, local officials and other decision makers. This guide is a resource. Use it to learn about the topics you care about and amplify the your voice for nature in the year ahead.

Many policies impact Iowa's environment, and you can find information about them here. You will also see that the solution for many of the things we care about can be addressed by finally funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.

It's time to prioritize Iowa's natural resources — join us in building a healthier and more natural Iowa.

Yours in conservation,

Anna Gray
INHF Public Policy Director

IF YOU CARE ABOUT...

Water quality

Iowa relies on its water as a source for drinking, fishing and recreating. **Each year, 30 million visits are made to Iowa's lakes and rivers, bringing nearly \$2 billion of spending to our state.** Yet, the Iowa DNR has identified more than 600 impaired waterbodies in Iowa that are polluted by soil, or by nitrate and phosphorous run-off from nonpoint sources, such as agriculture, that are not regulated by the Clean Water Act.

Improving water quality in Iowa means reducing sediment flow into rivers and streams, cleaning up impaired waterbodies and taking steps to protect our watersheds into the future. This includes funding for natural solutions to water quality, including wetland restoration, river buffers and floodplain management.

In 2018, the Iowa legislature passed a water quality bill known as Senate File 512 (SF512), officially making the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS) the key legal mechanism for reducing pollution in Iowa's waters. **The NRS will cost up to \$1 billion annually, while SF512 only allocates \$282 million total to water quality projects over the next 11 years** (concluding in June 2029). Funding for conservation agriculture will increase over time, but peaks at only \$15 million annually.

A **watershed-based approach** helps us strategically implement and manage conservation that improves water quality and manages excess water.



INHF recommends that the Iowa Flood Center and the Iowa Nutrient Research Center receive increased funding to continue their work to improve water quality and mitigate flood damage.



ADVOCACY ENHANCEMENTS

1

Explain the economic impact that a nearby lake has on your community. Find information about lake economic impact throughout Iowa at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

2

In the last 30 years, 951 flood-related presidential disaster declarations have been made in Iowa, costing the state \$13.5 billion. Wetlands act as natural sponges by holding water to prevent downstream flooding. However, over 90% of Iowa's wetlands have been drained for agriculture and development. Wetland restoration provides a cost-effective solution for mitigating flood damage and improving water quality.

3

Bacteria and nitrate pose public health risks to all Iowans. Recreating in water with toxic bacteria can cause serious illness, and is more likely to infect young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems. Water with excess nitrogen is particularly hazardous to infants and can cause a life-threatening condition known as "blue baby syndrome."

Check on the status of a water body near you or learn more about Iowa's water quality monitoring at www.iowadnr.gov.

IF YOU CARE ABOUT...

Trails

Multi-use trails help Iowans get outdoors, stay healthy, connect communities and stimulate local economies. **Iowa's trail systems are used by nearly 2 million people each year and generate over \$17.8 million in consumer spending.** In recent years, water trails have also become an increasingly popular recreational activity.

Studies show that about 25% of Iowans do not engage in any physical activity outside of their regular jobs. The inactivity of Iowans also has a significant economic impact. Inactivity costs the state over \$5.3 billion through lost worker productivity, increased medical costs and increased worker's compensation. Studies also indicate that people that live near trails are 50% more likely to meet physical activity guidelines. **Investing in Iowa's trails is an investment in public health, rural revitalization and economic prosperity.**

Iowa's State Recreational Trails Program has leveraged funding from federal and private sources to construct over 1,180 miles of new trails. Even so, demand for new recreational trails, trail maintenance costs and trail connections has consistently outpaced funding. Since 2014, allocations have consistently decreased, with only \$1 million allocated in the last 2 years.

Year	Project funding requests	State appropriation
2018	\$11.5 million	\$1 million
2017	\$13.6 million	\$1 million
2016	\$19.4 million	\$2.5 million
2015	\$23.4 million	\$3.4 million
2014	\$26.9 million	\$6 million



INHF recommends that the State Recreational Trails program be funded at \$18 million due to overwhelming requests for funding and more than \$100 million in planned trail projects identified by the Iowa DOT.



IF YOU CARE ABOUT...

Sustainable agriculture



Iowa has long led the nation in agricultural production. **With rich soils and an ideal climate for agriculture, though, comes great responsibility.** To protect healthy soils and achieve better water quality, and to ensure we are passing down healthy and sustainable land to the next generations, conservation must be a priority in agricultural policy.

Iowa farmers can utilize state cost-share and loan programs designated for promoting sustainable agriculture. These funding methods help farmers implement conservation practices on their land.

But with limited resources to provide incentive, voluntary conservation practices aren't at full strength. Cover crops, for example, were planted on 760,000 acres in 2017, a far cry from the 12 million acres needed as identified by the Nutrient Reduction Strategy. With nearly 70% of Iowa land in crop production, **supporting farmers and landowners in private land protection with adequate funding is necessary** to protect Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

Iowa landowners can also use the Iowa Charitable Conservation Contribution Tax Credit to protect their land, which provides tax incentives for permanently protecting agricultural and natural land. The tax credit has helped hundreds of landowners implement sustainable land use practices and ensure the long-term health of their land.



As we continue to rely on voluntary conservation practices, we need to provide substantial and dependable funding to farmers and landowners for conservation structure and more fully fund the Nutrient Reduction Strategy so that it may meet its goals.

ADVOCACY ENHANCEMENT

Personal stories reflecting the need for policy resonate with your legislator in an authentic way. Make your advocacy effort hit closer to home:

①

Share what economic impact a trail in your community has had.

Find individual trail economic data at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

②

Share an experience you have had on a trail or water trail in your home district or explain how a proposed trail could impact your community.

Find a list of potential trail projects at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

③

Iowa's rivers and streams give Iowans opportunity for outdoor recreation with natural water trails. Developing safe water trails requires clean water, the removal of dangerous low head dams and clearing of debris. The Water Trails and Low Head Dam Program has helped the Iowa DNR designate water trails across the state. On average, the program is allocated \$1 million per year. However, over the past two years, the program has only received \$500,000. Additional support for the Water Trails and Low Head Dam Program will be instrumental in making water trails a viable economic opportunity for Iowa.

ADVOCACY ENHANCEMENTS

①

Iowa farmers and landowners can access cost-share and loan programs to help make sustainable investments on the land, including:

- Financial Incentives Program
- Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP)
- Water Quality Initiative
- Conservation Practices Revolving Loan Fund
- State Revolving Fund

Learn more about these programs at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

②

Each county has a Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) office. The local SWCDs are responsible for prioritizing the conservation needs of the district and administering many of the state programs. Meet with a SWCD technician in your county and see how improvements on your farm may help achieve county goals.

Find out more about connecting with a local SWCD technician at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

③

There are many resources available for determining how to improve the sustainability of your land.

For more resources on conservation practices, go to www.inhf.org/policy2019.

IF YOU CARE ABOUT...

Outdoor recreation



Outdoor recreation has long been a great way to connect all Iowans to our beautiful state. More than 56 million visits are made to Iowa's parks, trails, lakes and rivers each year. Outdoor recreation is also a huge economic driving force: **Annually, outdoor recreation in Iowa generates \$8.7 billion in consumer spending, \$649 million in local and state tax revenue and supports 83,000 jobs.** The quality of life provided by outdoor recreation opportunities is key to attracting skilled workforces, increasing tourism and rural revitalization.

Yet, Iowa's ability to capitalize on the economic opportunities of outdoor recreation is stunted by limited resources. **Less than 3 percent of Iowa's land is open to the public, ranking 47th in the nation.** Further, these lands and their facilities require upkeep and maintenance that has been underfunded, with 94 of Iowa's counties reporting unmet needs totaling over \$782 million.

One way that the state of Iowa has invested in outdoor recreation is with the **Resource Enhancement and Protection program (REAP)**. Created in 1989, REAP uses funds from Iowa's gaming receipts to support the state's natural and cultural resources in each county. To date, REAP has supported more than 14,500 projects. Despite its success, REAP has never been fully funded, only receiving \$12 million last year. Without renewal from the state legislature, REAP will end in June 2021.

To support outdoor recreation, INHF recommends that REAP be fully funded at \$20 million and that the DNR funding be increased to properly manage facilities and make more land available for public use.

IF YOU CARE ABOUT...

Permanent funding



Iowa's water quality, trails, agriculture and outdoor recreation often rely on program funding set by the legislature that varies from year-to-year. **Permanent, sustainable funding for these initiatives is necessary to ensure that Iowa's natural resources and communities will be consistently supported.**

In 2010, Iowans voted to amend the state Constitution to create the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, a permanent and protected funding source for Iowa's communities and natural places. Nine years later, the Trust Fund sits empty, requiring a sales tax increase of 3/8 of a cent for funding. **If funded, the Trust Fund would generate at least \$180 million annually.**

The Trust Fund would provide farmers, local communities and state agencies with permanent and accountable funding. The funding formula would be allocated as such:

Funding category	% of funding	Policy areas impacted			
Natural resources	23	✓	✓	✓	✓
Soil conservation & water protection	20	✓		✓	
Watershed protection	14	✓		✓	
REAP	13	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local conservation partnerships	13	✓	✓		✓
Trails	10		✓		✓
Lake restoration	7	✓			✓

Water quality Sustainable agriculture
 Multi-use trails Outdoor recreation

INHF recommends that the legislature raise the sales tax by 3/8 cent to fund the Trust Fund and that the existing funding formula remains.

ADVOCACY ENHANCEMENT

1 REAP projects have been completed in all of Iowa's 99 counties. Find one near you and tell your legislator how it has impacted you and your community.

Find a list of REAP projects at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

2 Review the list of unmet county needs and tell your legislator what improvements you would like to see in your community.

Find a list of the state's unmet needs at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

3 REAP offers a unique way for citizens to get involved with the program. Each county has its own REAP committee that coordinates projects and develops a plan for future REAP projects. Iowans may also participate in regional REAP assemblies, where regional REAP projects are identified and participants can recommend changes to REAP policies, programs and funding. Learn more about how to get involved.

2019 is a REAP Assembly year. Learn more at www.iowadnr.gov.

ADVOCACY ENHANCEMENT

1 Because the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund will be funded through a sales tax, 16-20% of Trust Fund revenue would come from out-of-state visitors.

2 Nearby states have passed similar voter-approved sales tax measures:

- **Minnesota:** Since 2009, a 3/8 cent sales tax has raised \$2.6 billion, with \$860.1 million for clean water.
- **Missouri:** Since 1984, a 1/10 cent sales tax has raised \$1.5 billion, with \$732 million for private conservation improvements. In 2017, Missouri voters re-authorized the Conservation Sales Tax, with more than 80 percent approval.
- **Arkansas:** Since 1997 a 1/8 cent sales tax has raised over \$830 million, with \$365 million invested in state parks.

3 The Trust Fund formula was created by a wide-ranging group of stakeholders from public and private institutions prior to the 2010 statewide vote. It was crafted in a way that benefits all Iowans while addressing current needs, such as: rural economic development; water quality and water management; workforce attraction and retention; and public health.

UNDERSTANDING LEGISLATIVE

committees

Legislative committees play an important role in creating new laws and appropriating funds to enable existing programs. **As you connect with your legislators, is it helpful to know which committees your legislators serve on** and how the committees influence the issues you care about.

Each chamber has **standing committees** that focus on a particular subject area. When a bill is introduced, it is assigned to a committee to thoroughly review, seek input from stakeholders and hold hearings for public comment. **While a bill is in committee, it is often the most important time for the public to advocate for a specific bill.** The committee discusses their findings before reporting their conclusions and recommendations to the entire chamber, where the bill is debated and a vote of the whole chamber is held. If the bill is passed, it goes to the other chamber, where the process is repeated.

Joint appropriation subcommittees are also organized by subject matter, but are comprised of members of both the House and Senate. Rather than creating new legislation, the appropriation subcommittees are tasked with allocating funds to existing departments and programs. They review department funding requests, state revenue estimates and the governor's suggested budget in order to make recommendations to one of the appropriations standing committees. **When advocating specifically for funding, the best people to do so to are joint appropriation subcommittees members.**

The Committee Chair and Vice Chair are appointed by majority leadership to head the committee. The Ranking Member is the most senior member of the committee from the minority party. **Listed are the committees and committee leaders that are most relevant to INHF legislative priorities:**

SENATE

Agriculture Comm.

Chair: Dan Zumbach (R)

Vice Chair: Annette Sweeney (R)

Ranking Member: Kevin Kinney (D)

Appropriations Comm.

Chair: Michael Breitbart (R)

Vice Chair: Tim Kraayenbrink (R)

Ranking Member: Joe Bolkcom (D)

Natural Resources Comm.

Chair: Ken Rozenboom (R)

Vice Chair: Tom Shipley (R)

Ranking Member: Rob Hogg (D)

Transportation Comm.

Chair: Tim Kapucian (R)

Vice Chair: Waylon Brown (R)

Ranking Member: Jeff Danielson (D)

Ways & Means Comm.

Chair: Randy Feenstra (R)

Vice Chair: Dan Dawson (R)

Ranking Member: Pam Jochum (D)

HOUSE

Agriculture Comm.

Chair: Ross Paustian (R)

Vice Chair: David Sieck (R)

Ranking Member: Bruce Bearinger (D)

Appropriations Comm.

Chair: Pat Grassley (R)

Vice Chair: Ray Sorensen (R)

Ranking Member: Chris Hall (D)

Economic Growth Comm.

Chair: Skyler Wheeler (R)

Vice Chair: Holly Brink (R)

Ranking Member: Liz Bennett (D)

Environmental Protection Comm.

Chair: Dean Fisher (R)

Vice Chair: Jeff Shipley (R)

Ranking Member: Vicki Lensing (D)

Natural Resources Comm.

Chair: Rob Bacon (R)

Vice Chair: Tom Jeneary (R)

Ranking Member: Scott Ourth (D)

Transportation Comm.

Chair: Ashley Hinson (R)

Vice Chair: Dave Maxwell (R)

Ranking Member: Bob Kressig (D)

Ways & Means Comm.

Chair: Lee Hein (R)

Vice Chair: Jacob Bossman (R)

Ranking Member: Dave Jacoby (D)

JOINT APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES

Agriculture/Natural Resources

Chairs: Sen. Tom Shipley (R) & Rep. Norlin Mommsen (R)

Vice Chairs: Sen. Ken Rozenboom (R) & Rep. Anne Osmundson (R)

Ranking Members: Sen. Liz Mathis (D) & Rep. Chuck Isenhardt (D)

Economic Development

Chairs: Sen. Mark Lofgren (R) & Rep. Brian Best (R)

Vice Chairs: Sen. Tom Greene (R) & Rep. Tom Gerhold (R)

Ranking Members: Sen. Bill Dotzler (D) & Rep. Kirsten Running-Marquardt (D)

Transportation/Infrastructure/Capital Appropriations

Chairs: Sen. Craig Johnson (R) & Rep. Gary Mohr (R)

Vice Chairs: Sen. Roby Smith (R) & Rep. Phil Thompson (R)

Ranking Members: Sen. Jim Lykam (D) & Rep. Dennis Cohoon (D)

CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATORS

FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR

Not sure who your legislators are? Find out at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

BY PHONE

If you don't know your legislators' direct numbers, you can call the House or Senate switchboards to be directed.

House switchboard: 515-281-3221

Senate switchboard: 515-281-3371

BY EMAIL

All legislators have state emails they use during session. Find them at www.inhf.org/policy2019.

IN-PERSON

You may go to the Capitol any time the legislature is in session and ask to speak your legislators. You can also set up specific appointments with their individual offices.

BY MAIL

You may send letters to your legislators addressed to them at the Iowa State Capitol:

**1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319**

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about committee structure and find full listings of legislative committees, committee members and committee schedules, visit www.legis.iowa.gov/committees.

If you have questions about ongoing bills, legislative schedules, daily reports and legislative history, you can contact the **Legislative Information Office (LIO)** at **515-281-3566** or online at www.legis.iowa.gov.

How to connect

Engaging with decision-makers can be intimidating, but there are many ways you can make your voice heard. Here are some helpful tips:

Help your legislators represent you. As elected officials, your legislators represent your district and you. Expressing your concerns and what you would like to see happen in your home district empowers them to make sure your interests are being represented.

Make your message hit close to home. Remember, your legislators live in the same area that you do. Your kids may go to the same school, you may visit the same parks or ride the same trails.

Find where your interests, not politics, align. We know that protecting our natural resources and connecting people with the outdoors has multiple benefits. Find how those benefits align with the interests of your legislators. You both care about your home district, but what else do you share? A desire to create an Iowa that the next generation is proud to call home? Supporting the development of local businesses? Improving Iowans' quality of life, physical health and mental health?

No matter how you choose to contact your legislator, it's important to remember a few things:

- 1) Introduce yourself.** Where do you live, what do you do, what do you want to talk with them about?
- 2) Provide details using personal experience** or resources included in this guide. See the next page for examples on personalizing your message.
- 3) Make the ask.** Respectfully ask that your legislator support or fund a program that you care about. You may ask for support of more than one program.
- 4) Thank them** for their service.



MAKE THE CALL

Calling your legislators can be very effective. Start by saying your name and where you are from. Tell them specifically what issue you are calling about and how it affects you. Telling your story is the best way to make an impact. Finish by thanking them for their service.



MEET IN PERSON

Meeting your legislator in-person is the best thing an advocate can do. Whether it's at the Capitol or a legislative forum in your district, meeting face-to-face will help your concerns resonate. Focus on issues; don't dwell on statistics. Be polite, thank them for their service and tell your story.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

①

“Senator xxx, I am a native of Centerville and have owned a small business on the town square for over 10 years. In developing my business, I have found that Lake Rathbun and Honey Creek Resort have fueled our local economic development, and I would like for the state to support the development of a trail between the lake and our historic town square.”

②

“I respectfully ask that you work with your fellow state leaders to fund the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund so that Appanoose County may benefit from the economic development opportunities. Alternatively, I ask that State Recreational Trails Program be funded at \$18 million to help develop trails throughout rural Iowa.”



WRITE A LETTER

A simple note, like the postcard below, can help lawmakers register opinions from their constituents, especially when they are hearing from a lot of people. Be clear, concise, personal and polite. Most important, make sure they know exactly what you are asking for.

Dear



**NATURE'S
ADVOCATE**



**NAT
ADV**



**NATURE'S
ADVOCATE**



Handwriting practice area with a dotted border and vertical lines for tracing and writing.



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation

*Protecting and restoring
Iowa's land, water
and wildlife.*

**NATURE'S
ADVOCATE**



**NATURE'S
ADVOCATE**



**NATURE'S
ADVOCATE**